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Angelo Cattaneo holds a Ph.D. in History from the European University Institute in Florence. Currently he is a Research Fellow FCT (Investigador FCT- The Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology) based at CHAM-The Portuguese Centre for Global History in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the New University of Lisbon (CHAM-FCSH-UNL). His research revolves around the cultural construction of space from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, by studying cosmography, cartography, travel literature, the birth of the atlas, and the spatiality of languages and religions. Since 2012 is one of the coordinators of the project *Interactions between rivals: the*

Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan (c. 1549-c. 1647), financed by the FCT. Since 2014 he is a member of the research cluster *Engineering Historical Memory*, directed by Andrea Nanetti (NTU) and based at Singapore Technological University. Since June 2015 he is the Principal Investigator of the FCSH exploratory collective research project *The Space of Languages. The Portuguese Language in the Early Modern World (15th-17th centuries)*. He authored several publications including *Fra Mauro's Mappa mundi and Fifteenth-Century Venice* (Brepols, 2011). He also co-edited the volumes *The Making of European Cartography* (Florence, 2003) and *Humanisme et découvertes géographiques («Médiévales» 58, 2010)*. His research has been supported by numerous awards, such as the FCT and C.N.R.S. Postdoctoral Fellowships, the John Carter Brown Library, and the I Tatti-Harvard University Fellowships.

Building a World Unified by Maritime Networks.

Fra Mauro's Mappa Mundi between Venice and Lisbon, ca. 1450

Around the mid-fifteenth century an unprecedented visionary project about changing the world connectivity through the linking of several maritime and fluvial networks in the Indian Ocean, Central Asia, the Mediterranean Sea basin, and even involving the circumnavigation of Africa, took shape between Venice and Lisbon. Beyond this grandiose and prophetic project there was an obscure lay brother of the *Camaldolese* Order, called Fra Mauro, who designed a monumental *mappa mundi* that mobilized and aggregated knowledge of maritime flows and networks quite beyond the Venetian commercial space.

Fra Mauro's world map, designed around 1450 at the Camaldolese monastery of San Michele on Murano, in the lagoon of Venice, is housed today in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. A copy of the *mappa mundi* was later commissioned by the court of the King of Portugal D. Afonso V, between 1457 and 1459. Dispatched to Lisbon in April of 1459, it went lost. The extant map held in Venice is drawn on parchment laid down onto a wooden support and is contained within a square, gilded wood frame measuring 223 x 223 cm. Dispersed throughout the surface of the map there are three thousand inscriptions and hundreds of cognitive images, representing cities, temples, funerary monuments, trade routes and borders, ships, as well as a cosmographic scenes in the four corners. In extreme synthesis, the composite networks of contemporary

knowledge—scholasticism, humanism, monastic culture—and technical skills such as marine cartography, Ptolemaic cartography, mercantile practices—combine in the epistemological unity of Fra Mauro’s map to sustain the project to build a fully connected world through interconnected maritime flows.

By tracing and deconstructing Fra Mauro’s articulated written and visual sources, it will be shown that the *mappa mundi*, by means of both words and images, unpacks three principal social and cultural processes that deal with and reformulate the concepts of sea and maritime networks in the fifteenth-century: the foundation of a world economy through a direct connection, at that time fully conjectural, between the Mediterranean Sea basin and the Indian Ocean basin; the development of long-distance information and commercial networks; and, finally, an expansion—both physically and epistemologically—into seas that earlier were not believed to be accessible to man.

These are processes in which Venice and Lisbon played a determining role, with consequences for all of Europe, in the fifteenth century. Through a process of cosmographic imagination and by combining European, Arab, and Asian sources, Fra Mauro reformulated the very notion of “sea” transforming it from a major metaphysical and physical border and limit of human action into the main stage of human activities. The world, according to Mauro, could be transformed into one single unity by linking the three main commercial circuits of the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea basin through both an imaginative circumnavigation of Africa and fluvial and terrestrial routes that from the Indian Ocean reached the Europe via the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, Baghdad and Armenia.



Fra Mauro Navigation in the Indian Ocean